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Women in development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/216 on women in development, the present report focuses on decent work, unpaid care work and social protection. It emphasizes that decent work, support to unpaid care work and social protection are crucial for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment and for inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth and development. Assuming particular significance in the context of the global financial and economic crisis, decent work, support to unpaid care work and social protection have important multiplier effects across a spectrum of development goals, including poverty reduction and improved child well-being. Recommendations are provided for consideration by the Assembly.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 66/216 on women in development, the General Assembly recognized the links between gender equality, poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Assembly also reaffirmed women's significant contributions to the economy and to combating poverty and inequalities through remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and workplace, reiterating that women's empowerment is critical to eradicate poverty.

2. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of resolution 66/216 at its sixty-eighth session, including on integrating a gender perspective into national development strategies. In the present report, particular emphasis was placed on the issues of decent work, unpaid care work and social protection for women, especially given the ongoing financial and economic crisis. Based on inputs received from Member States and the United Nations system,[1] the present report reviews measures taken by Governments and support provided by the United Nations system to address these issues. It concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

II. Background

3. The normative framework for women's economic empowerment, decent work and social protection is grounded in a number of human rights declarations, conventions and resolutions. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides a comprehensive basis for the guarantee of women's full rights to employment, including access to social protection programmes and public services. More recently, the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) reaffirmed the importance of social protection in reducing inequalities. Moreover, under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights States have an obligation to take appropriate legislative, administrative, budgetary and other measures to progressively realize economic rights, to use maximum resources to do so and to avoid retrogression. Another milestone was the ILO Domestic Workers' Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which entitles domestic workers to fair conditions of employment and protection from human rights abuses. Further, at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States committed to take measures to ensure that all workplaces are free from discrimination, exploitation, violence and sexual harassment and bullying.

4. Reducing economic inequality in order to lessen the risk of economic crisis and enable faster recovery is now on the international policy agenda and much of

[1] Contributions were received from the Governments of: Belgium, Botswana, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Jordan, Ireland, Myanmar, Paraguay, Singapore, Slovenia, Sweden and Turkey. The following United Nations entities provided inputs: the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

the current public policy analysis calls for measures that will promote inclusive growth. Today, leading economists stress that economic inequality, which has been rising rapidly in the pre-crisis years in a number of countries, has been one of the main triggers of the recent economic crisis and is also stalling recovery today.[2] This was also well documented by other scholars,[3] who argued that the 2007-2008 crisis has shown that increasing income inequality is a major structural problem that needs to be addressed in order to accelerate the recovery and prevent future crises.

5. Projections for overall economic growth are raising additional concerns for the future. Projections by IMF[4] and the DESA of the United Nations Secretariat have been revised downward. For instance, the Department forecasts gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2013 in advanced economies to be 0.7 percentage points lower than was forecast in June 2012, to the now estimated 1.1 per cent. According to the Department, growth is also slowing in emerging and developing countries. The near-term economic outlook is especially gloomy in the Euro zone countries, where in 2012 GDP growth declined by 0.6 per cent, and recent projections suggest a contraction of 0.3 per cent in 2013, instead of an expansion of 0.1 per cent, as previously projected.[5]

6. Today there is consensus that the way forward is "employment-led recovery, underpinned by respect for human rights, including labour rights, and participatory processes through social dialogue".[6] Additionally, within the context of the post-2015 development dialogue, there has been widespread demand for the centrality of decent work and social protection in recovery efforts. This is underpinned and buttressed by United Nations policy efforts to promote "social protection floors" for all across a wide range of countries.

7. However, evidence shows that the global crisis led to deterioration in the quality of employment in a number of countries. An ILO Report[7] analysing advanced economies between 2007 and 2010 showed that the incidence of involuntary temporary employment increased in 80 per cent of the countries analysed, while part-time employment increased in 85 per cent of countries. In emerging and developing countries, the share of informal employment remains high, standing at more than 40 per cent in two thirds of those countries for which data are

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[2] Joseph Stiglitz, "Inequality Is Holding Back the Recovery"; accessed on 3 August 2013 at http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/19/inequality-is-holding-back-the-recovery.

[3] José Gabriel Palma, "Homogeneous middles vs. Heterogeneous tails, and the End of the Inverted-U: It's All About the Share of the rich", *Development and Change*, 42(1): pp. 87-153 (The Hague, International Institute of Social Studies, 2011).
Ashwani Saith, "Inequality, Imbalance, Instability: Reflections on a Structural Crisis", *Development and Change*, vol. 42(1), pp. 70-86 (The Hague, International Institute of Social Studies, 2011).

[4] International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook 2013: Hopes, realities, risks* (Washington, D.C., April 2013).
(United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.II.C.2), *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2013* (New York, United Nations, 2013).

[5] International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook Update: Gradual upturn in global growth during 2013 (Washington, D.C., 2013).

[6] Guy Ryder, "Human rights and the post-2015 agenda: The role of decent work", introductory remarks delivered by the ILO Director General to the Human Rights Council at the high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming (Geneva, 1 March 2013).

[7] ILO, *World of Work Report 2012: Better jobs for a better economy* (Geneva, International Institute for Labour Studies, 2012).

available. Since 2010, involuntary temporary and part-time employment has increased in many countries where employment growth has resumed.

8. The economic crisis also had a gendered impact on the quality of work. Another ILO report shows that "vulnerable employment", comprising work carried out by contributing family workers and own account workers, as opposed to wage and salaried workers, is more widespread for women than for men. In 2012, there was a global gender gap of 2.3 percentage points, with a larger share of women in such vulnerable employment, 50.4 per cent of employed women, compared to men, among whom 48.1 per cent were engaged in such employment, pushing women to seek fragile, temporary types of work, which are generally low-paid and lack benefits.[8]

9. Care is an essential, universal need and supports the engagement of both men and women in paid work. Unpaid care work contributes to individual and household well-being, social development and economic growth, but it often goes unrecognized and undervalued by policymakers, as does the fact that its costs and burdens are unequally born across gender and class. Care is primarily provided by women and girls and has important implications for gender equality. Recent studies[9] have shown that the economic crisis has pushed many women to seek paid employment, partly to complement income loss following a spousal job loss, or in response to a worsening economic situation in the household. However, this increased participation in paid work has not resulted in reduced responsibility for unpaid work.[10] The responsibility for unpaid work is one of the reasons why government austerity programmes that result in cutbacks to social sector expenditures hit women, especially those that are the most economically vulnerable, particularly hard.[11]

10. Following the global financial and economic crisis and in light of high public debt levels, pressure has increased for austerity and fiscal consolidation to a degree that seriously threatens financing for social protection. As noted by several prominent economists,[12] many advanced and middle-income countries have started to dismantle their social protection systems thereby undermining the extent to which social protection measures can act as automatic stabilizers.

11. While most of the debate on the negative effects of austerity measures has focused on Western Europe and North America, part of the untold story remains the adverse implications of these measures for women in these contexts, as well as the wider implications of the crisis for people in low income countries, particularly women, children, and other vulnerable groups. A recent study, which undertook a review of public expenditure and adjustment measures in 181 countries, indicates

[8] See ILO, *Global Employment Trend for Women 2012* (Geneva, International Institute for Labour Studies, 2012).

[9] See Günseli Berik and Ebru Kongar (2013), "Time Allocation of Married Mothers and Fathers in Hard Times: The 2007 Recession", *Feminist Economics*, vol. 19 (3) (April 2013).

[10] See Seçil A. Kaya Bahçe and Emel Memiş (2013), "Estimating the Impact of 2008-2009 Economic Crisis on Work Time in Turkey", *Feminist Economics*, vol. 19 (3) (April 2013), Levy Economics Institute, working paper 686 (Bard College, 2011).

[11] See Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, James Heinz and Stephanie Seguino, "Perspectives on the causes and consequences of the financial crisis: Conversation between heterodox macroeconomics and feminist economics", *Feminist Economics*, vol. 19 (3) (April 2013).

[12] See Joseph Stiglitz, "The global crisis, social protection and jobs", *International Labour Review*, vol. 148 (2009), no. 1-2, pp. 1-13.

that Governments are undertaking various adjustment measures in response to the crisis. Projections from the report show that fiscal contraction will be more severe in the developing world. Overall, 68 developing countries are projected to cut public spending by 3.7 percent of GDP on average between 2013 and 2015 compared to 26 high-income countries, which are expected to contract by 2.2 per cent of GDP, on average.[13]

III. Decent work for women

12. According to ILO, "decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men".

13. In the last two decades, the global rate of female labour force participation has increased from 50 per cent to 52 per cent, and the male rate has dropped from 82 to 78 per cent.[14] However, despite an improvement in female labour force participation rates, women did not benefit from increased access to decent work. Globally, both men and women have had limited access to such work. Most of the job gains following the crisis have been low paying and lacking in benefits. Furthermore, non-enforcement of core labour standards propels a "race to the bottom", which ultimately exacerbates poverty and exclusion.[15] The non-enforcement of these standards can place women at increased risk of violence, harassment and exploitation at work, thereby impeding promotion of "full participation in the formal economy and their equal access to full employment and decent work".[16]

14. The current global outlook for employment remains bleak, despite policy efforts in advanced and middle income countries to stimulate aggregate demand, and provide liquidity to the banking system. In the aftermath of the 2007-2008 crisis, obtaining employment has become very difficult. The crisis has worsened gender gaps in unemployment across all regions. The gender gap in employment increased from 0.5 percentage points in 2007 to 0.7 percentage points in 2012, eliminating 13 million jobs for women, a trend expected to persist until 2017.[16] Initially, male-dominated sectors — finance, construction, transport and manufacturing — were most affected, but as the global downturn intensified, the crisis appears to have worsened gender differentials in unemployment across all regions, especially as public sector employment, in many countries a female-dominated sector, came under pressure.

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[13] See Matthew Cummins and Isabel Ortiz, *The age of austerity: A review of public expenditures and adjustment measures in 181 countries*, Initiative for Policy Dialogue and the South Centre Working Paper (Geneva, 2013).

[14] International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends 2013: Recovering from a second jobs dip* (Geneva, 2013).

[15] See International Labour Organization, *Global employment trends for women* (Geneva, March 2009).

[16] "Agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls"; available from www.un.org/womenwatch/daw.

15. Young women and men have been particularly affected. According to an ILO report,[14] the global youth unemployment rate, estimated at 12.6 per cent in 2013, translates into 73 million unemployed young people. With shrinking opportunities for young people who are entering the labour market for the first time, informal employment has become pervasive and transitions to decent work are slow and difficult.

16. Recent evidence from 43 countries on gender-based wage differentials in 15 sectors, from construction to domestic work, shows that women earn 18 per cent, on average, less than their male counterparts.[17] Gender wage gaps reflect disadvantages in education; bargaining power; labour market mobility and flexibility; a high degree of involvement in part-time, temporary and low-income jobs; and direct discrimination.

17. Employing domestic workers is a growing global trend for families seeking to reconcile household responsibilities with employment demands. The ILO estimates that there are between 53 million and 100 million domestic workers worldwide, of which 83 per cent are women.[18] However, labour laws in many countries do not cover domestic work and its hidden nature makes it more difficult to enforce legislation where it exists.[18] The ILO Convention on Domestic Workers is a step in the right direction, although concrete outcomes for workers will depend on legislative changes at the national level, and effective follow-up by autonomous organizing on the part of domestic workers themselves and alliances with other rights-based organizations, including trade unions and women's rights organizations.

18. Certain groups of women face additional constraints in the labour market as a result of their geographical location and/or intersectional forms of discrimination, including on the grounds of race, ethnicity and nationality. Within paid domestic work, for example, more marginalized groups of women tend to dominate. In addition, women who are smallholder farmers in rural areas have been adversely affected by decades of underinvestment in agriculture, lack of secure access to land, and recent volatilities in food and commodity prices and export-driven agricultural enterprises that have offered seasonal and casual work often under adverse working conditions.

19. Economic pressures have also pushed many women to migrate to find work, sometimes leaving their own children behind in order to take care of other children and the elderly in richer countries. Women — both high-skilled and "unskilled" — constitute an increasing proportion of cross-border labour flows. Such strategies in response to economic distress have become more common with the increasing frequency of financial and economic crises in recent decades.[19]

20. Women migrants face particular obstacles in accessing social protection and services, reliable information on safe and legal migration, low-cost remittance transfer mechanisms and savings and investment schemes. They are vulnerable to

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[17] Kea G. Tijdens and Maarten van Klaveren, "Frozen in time: Gender pay gap unchanged for 10 years" (Brussels, International Trade Union Confederation, 2012).

[18] International Labour Organization, "Global and regional estimates on domestic workers", policy brief no. 4 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2011).

[19] Nicola Piper, "International migration and gendered axes of stratification (Introduction)", Nicola Piper, ed., *New Perspectives on Gender and Migration: Livelihood, Rights and Entitlements* (New York and Abingdon/Oxon, UNRISD/Routledge, 2007).

discrimination and violence at every stage of migration by employment agencies, employers and public officials.[20]

IV. Measures taken by Member States and support by United Nations agencies to address women's decent work

21. In support of national priorities, Member States have carried out a range of policy and programmatic interventions to promote women's decent work. Chile, El Salvador, Jordan, Slovenia and Sweden have mainstreamed gender equality into public policies and institutional processes, including labour policies. Similarly, Ireland has used its national women's strategy to develop gender sensitive provisions. Colombia, El Salvador, Jordan, Singapore, Slovenia and Turkey are implementing policies and legislation to eliminate gender-based workplace discrimination.

22. Chile provides subsidies to promote women's entry into the labour market, while Sweden provides income tax credits that make women's work more attractive. Jordan, Myanmar and Turkey provide vocational training, skills upgrading and on-the-job training; and established specialized profession acquirement centres. Singapore implements programmes to encourage employers to adopt flexible work arrangements, job redesign, support the employment of mature workers, and establish Smart Work Centres nationwide to enhance women's workforce participation.

23. Some Member States implemented measures to monitor and reduce gender wage gaps, such as Colombia, which awarded a Gender Equity Seal for entities achieving gender wage parity. Colombia, Singapore and Turkey reported awareness-raising on workers' employment rights and employers' legal obligations.

24. Some countries have provided labour law coverage and employment-related social protection to informal sector workers. Jordan and Singapore covered foreign domestic workers in their labour laws. Other countries have instituted social protection measures, including social security provisions for informal sector workers (El Salvador); supplements to pension contributions of older low-wage workers (Singapore); subsidies to insurance premiums paid by part-time female workers; and income tax exemptions on women's sale of self-produced goods at fairs and festivals (Turkey).

25. ILO, with UN-Women and the United Nations Global Compact, is promoting the Multinational Enterprises Declaration, including non-discrimination principles, and provides technical assistance to companies on fundamental rights and principles at work.

26. United Nations agencies have supported job creation, placement and skills training for women, often in partnership with Governments and civil society. These include food or cash for assets and training programmes in largely rural food insecure contexts; public works programmes in rural Egypt (UNDP); and facilitating private job placement service and training in the West Bank (UNRWA).

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[20] International Labour Organization, *Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work*, International Labour Conference, ninety-eighth session, Report VI (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2009).

27. UNIDO supported women's small-scale production of olive oil, textiles, dried fruits and vegetables in northern Morocco. UNDP provided training to women in Kyrgyzstan to produce building insulation materials and supported the Government of Lebanon to establish International Organization for Standardization-certified women-owned and operated cooperatives for food processing and packaging. UNIDO and UNDP have focused on resource-efficient and cleaner production and renewable energy to promote cleaner, non-hazardous working conditions and enhance women's productivity.

28. UNRWA provides income-generating opportunities for Palestinian refugees, as well as other poor or marginal groups, extending credit and complementary financial services to small-business owners, micro-entrepreneurs and households.

29. The Fund for Gender Equality grants supported over 163,741 women to secure decent work, over 114,433 women to gain skills and resources, and over 4 million women to gain protection and security for themselves and their families. Additionally, together with the United Nations Capital Development Fund, UN-Women supports Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania in improving women's access to resources and services at the local level through gender responsive planning, programming and budgeting to better respond to women's priorities. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the programme has contributed to women improving their agricultural skills and knowledge of agri-business. As a result, they improved the quality of their processed food and generated more demand for products at a higher price.

30. UNDP expanded women's access to productive assets and financial services through the establishment of funds and micro-finance schemes and by promoting women's entrepreneurship in Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In Egypt, UNDP is supporting the implementation of innovative public works programmes in rural areas, with a focus on women and youth, to support employment in these areas.

31. A number of countries have reported efforts aimed at providing financing for women's economic empowerment. Botswana disburses grants to women's groups and non-governmental organizations for income-generating projects that promote women's employment outside of the home, their rights to own property and their participation in decision-making outside the home. Chile, Myanmar, Paraguay and Turkey have facilitated women's entrepreneurship and business development through subsidies and other forms of financial support to women's small enterprises and training.

32. Ireland, Slovenia and Sweden have ongoing efforts to finance gender equality initiatives within the framework of overseas development assistance. For instance, a large focus of Sweden's international development cooperation is on women's economic empowerment, skills-building, social protection and working conditions. Sweden supports related initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Mozambique. Sweden also provides financial support to the global network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, which works to improve the status of women in the informal economy, and to Women's World Banking, an organization that aims to sustain and improve micro-finance for women.

33. Governments also reported using data collection systems to register, monitor and evaluate cases of labour violations, sexual harassment and other obstacles to women's labour rights. Belgium commissioned a study on obstacles in the labour field related to pregnancy and maternity. Results of the survey were used to inform a series of recommendations for improvements targeted to workers, employers and human resource managers. Jordan developed a database on wage discrimination to enable decision-makers to formulate evidence-based policies that can enhance pay equity, raise awareness and propose legislation in support of wage equality.

34. UNIDO worked to increase the proportion of women with decent work and opportunities to participate in trade-related activities collecting sex-disaggregated baseline data, developing gender-sensitive indicators and promoting women's participation in decision-making. The United Nations Statistics Division also formally endorsed a minimum set of 52 gender indicators in February 2013, which were produced by the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics. This minimum set includes indicators on participation in productive activities.

V. Addressing women's unpaid care work

35. "Unpaid work" encompasses all forms of unremunerated work activities and plays an important role in improving welfare in the household and the economy as a whole.[21] Unpaid care work is the care of persons for no explicit monetary reward with the majority of this work done within households. Unpaid care work can also be performed across households in communities and within institutions.[22] While this work is unpaid, its contributions constitute meaningful work with both time and energy costs.[23]

36. The provision of unpaid care underpins the ability of both men and women to engage in paid work. It is essential to the functioning of the economy, but often goes undercounted and unrecognized as labour markets fail to acknowledge its contributions.[24] It is not included in labour force surveys or in GDP figures and, as a result, the realities of unpaid care work burdens are not visible in the data that inform policymaking and programmatic interventions. In order to increase the recognition of this work, quantitative and qualitative data are needed to clearly show its scope and how it is distributed within families and communities.

37. Women and girls continue to carry an unequal level of responsibility for unpaid care work despite their increased participation in paid work. Studies[21] using time-use data in various high-, middle- and low-income countries have shown that unpaid work is not evenly distributed between men and women, with women performing between two and five hours more in unpaid work than men. Research[25]

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[21] Rania Antonopoulos, "The Unpaid Care Work — Paid Work Connection", Working Paper No. 541 (Annandale-on-Hudson, Levy Economics Institute, 2008).

[22] Shahra Razavi, "The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context", Gender and Development Programme Paper Number 3 (Geneva, UNRISD, 2007).

[23] Deborah Budlender, "Why should we care about unpaid work?" (New York, United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2004).

[24] Diane Elson, "Labor markets as gendered institutions: Equality, efficiency and empowerment issues", *World Development*, vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 611-627 (1999).

[25] United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, "Combating Poverty and Inequality: Structural Change, Social Policy and Politics" (Geneva, UNRISD, 2010); anglophone countries

conducted in a number of anglophone, developing, Central European, Eastern European, Nordic and southern European countries shows a similar trend, but with variations among countries. Women's time spent on unpaid care is higher than men everywhere, but the reverse is true for paid work. However, the gender gap is much more acute in developing countries, where the mean time spent by women on unpaid care work is more than twice the mean time spent by men. When paid and unpaid work are combined, women in developing countries allocate more time to work than men, with less time for education, leisure, political participation and self-care.

38. The recession and subsequent jobless recovery have widened the workload and leisure-hours gap between mothers and fathers in some countries, with mothers substituting paid work for unpaid work while fathers do not take on more unpaid work as a result of reduced hours of paid work.[9] Additionally, reductions in public expenditures on essential services and the introduction of user fees in the education, health, water and sanitation sectors have driven poor families to depend even more on women and girls' unpaid labour with serious implications for their health and well-being.[26]

39. An important first step is the recognition of unpaid care work through time-use surveys that measure such work and make it possible for economic models that inform policymaking to take account of it. Equally important, some forms of unpaid work that involve drudgery need to be reduced. Reducing time and energy spent in activities such as fetching water and washing clothes through investments in infrastructure and time-saving domestic technology frees up women's time for income-generating work, education and training, political and community activities and leisure and self-care. Moreover, investment in quality, accessible care services for children and others needing care, gender-responsive work-family reconciliation policies and cultural change can help redistribute unpaid care work between women and men within families, and between families and the public sector.[27]

VI. Measures taken by Member States and support by United Nations agencies to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care work

40. Increased responsibility by the State for the provision of public services, coupled with appropriate incentives and support to households, can help promote more equitable distribution of unpaid care work within families, and between households and the State. In high-income countries, affordable, accessible, high-quality care services, with hours harmonized with the working day, have improved work-family balance; increased parents' labour force participation, continuity and

(Canada, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America), developing countries (Argentina, India, Nicaragua, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania), Central European countries (Belgium, France and Germany), Eastern European countries (Hungary, Poland and Slovenia), Nordic countries (Finland, Norway and Sweden), and southern European countries (Italy, Spain and Portugal).

[26] Shahra Razavi, "The return to social policy and the persistent neglect of unpaid care", *Development and Change*, vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 377-400 (2007).

[27] Diane Elson, "The Three R's of Unpaid Work: Recognition, Reduction and Redistribution", submitted to the expert group meeting on unpaid work, economic development and human well-being, United Nations Development Programme (New York, 2008).

productivity; and have reduced absenteeism. In developing countries, childcare services have also increased labour force participation. However, care services for very young children are typically unavailable, expensive or limited in coverage.[15]

41. Some States have developed policies and legislation that provide for maternity, paternity and parental leave (Chile, Singapore, Slovenia and Sweden) and elaborated provisions to ensure that parental leave is shared, as a way of promoting shared care responsibilities between men and women and improving work-life balance. This includes a gender equality bonus to encourage parents to share parental leave equally (Sweden), and the non-transferable right to paternity leave for up to 90 days (Slovenia). An inter-agency[28] Maternity Resource Protection Package serves as a policy support and capacity strengthening tool for Governments and other partners. ILO has engaged with tripartite constituents to promote work-life balance initiatives in Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, China and the Republic of Moldova.

42. Several States noted that they support non-parental care through direct service provision such as early childhood education and care through nurseries and kindergartens (Jordan); nurseries in companies employing 20 or more workers (Chile); granting subsidies to care providers or income allowances that match parental contributions to make childcare services more affordable (Singapore); establishing national systems of care provision and harmonizing business hours with childcare and school hours (El Salvador). Mexico's programme Estancias Infantiles para Apoyar a Mujeres Trabajadores, which provides childcare subsidies for low-income working mothers, was designed explicitly to reduce the burden of unpaid care work and encourage women's economic activity.[29]

43. Argentina, Chile, Mexico, South Africa and Uruguay have implemented policies to address the issue of care work, including the provision of care services and early childhood education. Countries such as China and India are providing paid domestic/care services, performed in some cases by non-profit organizations or individuals employed by the State. However, in most cases, those performing care work do not enjoy the same leave entitlements or social security benefits as State employees. An exception is Sweden, where care services are financed by the State and performed by State employees, with full rights and entitlements.

44. To reduce women's and girls' time spent on firewood collection and the associated risk of violence, in 2009, WFP, in partnership with the Women's Refugee Commission, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the United Nations Environmental Programme, introduced the Safe Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy in Humanitarian Settings (SAFE) stoves initiative. In 2012, the initiative had reached more than 2 million people.

45. Some States have also taken measures to recognize and value women's unpaid care work, including by regularly conducting time-use surveys to highlight and measure women's and men's unpaid work (El Salvador and Sweden); the inclusion of care work in the System of National Accounts to measure women's contributions to social and economic development; and the redefinition of unpaid work

[28] ILO, WHO, UNICEF, UN-Women, UNFPA, International Baby Food Action Network.

[29] Paola Pereznieto and Mariana Campos, "Gendered risks, poverty and vulnerability in Mexico: Contributions of the Estancias Infantiles para Apoyar a Madres Trabajadores programme" (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2010).

(Colombia). These studies, along with the preparation of household satellite accounts, are particularly useful for calculating, recognizing and making visible the contributions of women's care work to the economic and social development of the country.

46. UNDP has supported a number of Governments in their efforts to implement time-use surveys. Its Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean supported the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College to develop an innovative index to link income and time poverty in the new Levy Institute Measure of Time and Income Poverty.

47. The United Nations Statistics Division is working to support the efforts of Member States to implement time-use surveys with the trial International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics. This international classification is intended to provide the structure of a classification that could be adapted to national circumstances and better facilitate international comparisons.

48. UN-Women also provides support to Member States to conduct time-use surveys. With support from UN-Women, Algeria and Morocco designed and conducted national time-use surveys during the period of 2011-2012.[30]

VII. Social protection for women

49. Social protection is concerned with preventing, managing and overcoming situations that adversely affect people's well-being or living standards. It includes contingencies such as illness, disability, maternity and old age; market-risks such as unemployment and price volatilities that adversely affect the incomes of farmers or self-employed workers; and economic crises and natural disasters.[31] According to ILO, 80 per cent of the world population lacks social protection.[32] While it is recognized that social protection is a key policy response for addressing poverty, affordability, costing and financing social protection efforts remain challenging.

50. Social protection instruments encompass social insurance and social assistance programmes. Social insurance programmes are typically accessed through formal employment, as in the case of contributory social insurance programmes for health, old age and maternity, or alternatively through company-based health plans. These types of programmes can also include "dependents" under their coverage. In some countries Governments have taken steps to adapt their social protection systems to transformations in the labour markets, bringing those who are informally employed or self-employed under the coverage of health insurance programmes by making affiliation mandatory and by partially subsidizing their contributions.[33]

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[30] Ministry of Finance, National Statistical Office, National Time Use Survey Algeria 2012, Dissemination workshop of preliminary results, Institut National de Santé Publique, Algiers, 30 June 2013.

[31] See United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, "Combating Poverty and Inequality: Structural Change, Social Policy and Politics" (Geneva, UNRISD, 2010).

[32] International Labour Organization, "Social Protection Floor for a Fair and Inclusive Globalization" (Geneva, 2011).

[33] Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Social Insurance (Pensions and Health), Labour Markets and Coverage in Latin America*, Social Policy and Development Programme Paper No. 36 (Geneva, UNRISD, 2010); Huck-Ju Kwon and Byonghu Tchoe, "The political economy of national health insurance

51. Social assistance programmes provide "non-contributory" benefits, usually to those falling below a certain level of income and/or meeting some other criteria of vulnerability. Because they do not rely on formal labour relationships and previous contributions, social assistance programmes are especially important for low-income countries with large informal sectors.[31] These programmes have moved to centre-stage in recent years, in the context of global concerns about poverty.

52. Both instruments have historically been used in developed countries, where the concern has been with temporary income shortfalls and transitory poverty in otherwise relatively acceptable living standards.[31] Interest in social protection in a development context has been further triggered by recurrent economic and social crises, and concerns about poverty and adverse labour market conditions. In developing countries, where poverty is chronic, research has drawn attention to the need to not only tackle sharp declines in income, but also to address persistently low incomes. In such contexts, social protection and security must include not only elements of "protection", such as preventing a decline in living standards, but also of "promotion", including enhancing average living conditions and dealing with persistent deprivation.[34]

53. Women can benefit directly from non-contributory social assistance measures, in the form of cash transfers that are often targeted to low-income mothers. Such transfers can be made with associated conditional requirements or without conditions. While conditional cash transfers increase children's enrolment and attendance rates and result in improved health, there is very little evidence that it is the conditionalities that have brought about these changes, rather than the additional cash available to the household. The South African Child Support Grant is given to the primary care provider and is not conditional on a recipient's behaviour. Estimates suggest that well over 80 per cent of eligible children are getting the grant, with a positive impact on children's development. The South African evidence reveals the positive impact of unconditional grants.[31]

54. Allowances provided to women as caregivers, including through conditional cash transfer schemes can impose additional burdens of time and work on women who become responsible for fulfilling the conditions. In some cases, these programmes actually reinforce the gendered division of labour, by reinforcing care for children as the primary duty of mothers and not fathers.

55. Social assistance programmes should not therefore be seen as a substitute for State investment in public services. Social assistance payments ideally should be one component of a much more comprehensive system of social security and social services, and often work best when they are complemented by investments in public services.

56. Women also benefit from measures to reduce unpaid labour, especially when the burden of unpaid care is transferred to social or community provision, which may have the additional positive impact of creating jobs for women in the social and public utility sectors. Social protection measures can be combined with active

in Korea", M. Mackintosh and M. Koivusalo, eds., Commercialization of Health Care. Global and Local Dynamics and Policy Responses (Basingstoke, Palgrave/UNRISD, 2005).

[34] Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, "Public action for social security: Foundations and strategy", Ahmad Ehtisham, Jean Drèze, John Hills and Amartya Sen, eds., *Social Security in Developing Countries* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991).

labour market policies, such as job search and guidance measures; facilitating apprenticeships and other ways of creating labour market exposure; skill development; and assistance in advancing or completing formal education. Non-contributory pensions, disability allowances and other such cash transfers allow women who have performed mainly unpaid labour throughout their lives to receive some form of social security. Cash or in-kind provision for assets, training or public employment can also benefit women if designed with the specific aim to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

57. The economic crisis has highlighted the need for broad-based social protection measures both in reducing poverty and vulnerability and as a counter-cyclical measure. In this context, the United Nations Social Protection Floor Initiative is very relevant.[31] It includes guarantees of basic income security in the form of social transfers in cash or in kind, such as pensions for the elderly and persons with disabilities, child benefits, income support benefits and/or employment guarantees and services for the unemployed and working poor, and universal access to essential affordable social services.[31]

58. The Social Protection Floor Initiative emphasizes the role of social protection measures in cushioning the impact of the crisis among vulnerable populations, serving as a macroeconomic stabilizer fuelling demand, enhancing access to markets and enabling people to overcome poverty and social exclusion. This approach represents a shift from the temporary, needs-based "social safety net" that targeted relief to vulnerable groups to cope with economic and social insecurities. Instead, it offers a rights-based approach to social protection, with guaranteed basic social rights.

VIII. Measures by Member States and support by United Nations agencies to address national priorities on social protection for women

59. The notion of increasing access to social protection has been gaining strength for over two decades. In recent years, many Governments have increased their efforts to either introduce or extend social protection measures. While, for the most part, they have been restricted to formal types of employment, countries such as Costa Rica and the Republic of Korea have addressed this issue by extending the coverage of health insurance programmes to the self-employed or other formally employed, by partially subsidizing their contribution and making it mandatory.[35]

60. In Bolivia, Botswana, rural areas of Brazil, Mauritius and Namibia, non-contributory pensions are now recognized as a universal right. Chile, Costa Rica and South Africa have also implemented means-tested non-contributory pensions.

61. Several Latin American countries have instituted raises to the minimum wage, increased public investment and expanded social protection, all of which have contributed to reductions in regional class inequality. Both female and male

[35] Camila Arza and others, "Gendered Impacts of Globalization: Employment and Social Protection", UNRISD Research Report for United Kingdom Department for International Development (Geneva, 2012).

employment rates have increased as a result of these policies, but the effect has been greater on women and thereby has reduced overall gender employment gaps. This significant change has implications for the starkest gender inequalities in the region, including in the areas of employment, wages and occupational segregation.[36]

62. Social protection programmes adopted over the last three decades have gone some way to reducing poverty through the provision of a social safety net for the most marginalized people.[37] In Mexico, the Progresa/Oportunidades programme, initiated in 1997, provides cash transfers mainly to women and has now reached more than 30 million people across all regions. Similarly in Brazil, the Bolsa Familia programme is the largest conditional cash transfer programme in the developing world, reaching over 46 million people, with 93 per cent of the payments to women as the legally responsible beneficiaries.

63. In recent years, several countries have implemented public works programmes, in recognition that the State should act as an employer of last resort to provide social assistance to those in need. In India, the 2005 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act enhances livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household. In 2010, almost half of the beneficiaries of the programme were women.[35]

64. Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme, launched in 2004, provides a safety net that enables the very poor to become more resilient to shocks by building their own asset base. The Programme provides food and cash transfers in exchange for labour on public works programmes. Around 32 per cent of its beneficiaries are women. South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme is also an example of employment guarantee scheme, which is designed to help those in need to cope with temporary loss of income due to a crisis or other shocks. About 79 per cent of the programme beneficiaries are women.[35]

65. Women's self-help groups have played an important role in mobilizing and organizing women to enhance their economic opportunities through strategies, including savings, credit and social organizing. While this is important, they have also championed legislative action to promote decent work for all. In India, the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 grants social protection to unorganized workers that includes access to health and maternity benefits, pensions and disability coverage and other benefits. The Self-Employed Women's Association played a major role in getting the law passed.

66. The United Nations system has been advocating with, and supporting, Governments to implement the social protection floor. Reported efforts include the formation of an international coalition of United Nations agencies, IMF, the World Bank, regional development banks, donors and NGOs; the launch of a joint UNDP, ILO and UN-Women publication on gender and social protection that has generated national dialogues in El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua; and the piloting of a

[36] Stephanie Seguino, "Critical analysis of progress on financing for gender equality and issues of policy coherence", paper presented at the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 2012).

[37] Ariel Fiszbein and Norbert Schady, *Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty* (Washington, D.C., The World Bank, 2009).

gender and social protection systems course in Panama, which involved eight countries in the region and was replicated in Argentina.

67. ESCAP has implemented an interregional project on the theme "Strengthening social protection" in collaboration with ECA, ECLAC and ESCWA that supports Member States to develop effective social protection policies and programmes through the exchange of lessons learned and capacity-building activities.

68. A number of Member States also provided examples of the establishment of data collection systems and the use of sex-disaggregated data in relation to social protection for women. For instance, Slovenia collects sex-disaggregated data on issues such as the use of parental and paternal leave.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

69. **Significant gender inequalities persist in women's access to decent work, including the continued and disproportionate representation of women in informal, insecure employment; specific constraints faced by vulnerable groups of women as a result of discrimination and geographic location; and unequal pay for equal work. Unpaid care work, which underpins the ability of both men and women to engage in paid work, continues to be primarily provided by women and girls, constraining their ability to participate equally in employment and social and political life, and to earn an income commensurate with that of men.**

70. **Social protection measures do not reach 80 per cent of the population, thereby largely failing to support the poorest and most disadvantaged or to provide social safety nets and support to reduce vulnerability and promote resilience to various kinds of shocks. This, coupled with insufficient access to quality social services, impacts women owing to their unequal position in the labour market, concentration in informal sector employment and primary responsibility for caregiving.**

71. **These trends have been exacerbated by the economic crisis and subsequent austerity measures in developed and developing countries alike. The economic crisis, while pushing more women into paid work, has also deepened the informality and the vulnerability of women's employment. Cuts to social protection and social services as a result of the crisis, together with austerity measures adopted by many Governments, have increased the burden of unpaid care work on women, thereby reinforcing and exacerbating existing gender inequalities.**

72. **As many leading economists have now recognized, investing in social protection measures is critical not only to ameliorate the worst effects of economic crises, but also to promote a robust and sustained recovery and promote sustainable livelihoods. This must be accompanied by accelerated efforts to address structural inequalities and discrimination that increase the likelihood of future economic crises. Without investing in the promotion of decent work, support for unpaid care work and the provision of comprehensive social protection and social services, recovery will be slower, the risk of recurring crisis greater and efforts to promote more inclusive, sustainable growth less successful.**

73. It is therefore encouraging to see many Member States investing in efforts to promote decent work and social protection for women in the context of the crisis and response to it. These efforts include vocational and skills training to enhance women's employability; measures to enhance rural women's access to resources; entrepreneurship development; measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid care work on women; and social protection measures.

74. Looking forward, however, a more transformative approach is needed. Member States are currently discussing development of the post-2015 agenda and the sustainable development goals. Participants in consultations to shape the new development agenda are calling for access to decent work, comprehensive social protection, quality social services, and economic transformation to ensure inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic growth. A universal, comprehensive and transformative approach to promotion of decent work for all, equal distribution of care responsibilities and access to social protection and social services is needed to achieve gender equality and women's rights and to realize the future we want for all.

75. In order to create and/or strengthen the enabling environment for women's access to decent work, the recognition, the reduction and the redistribution of unpaid care work, and access to social protection and social services, Member States are encouraged to consider the following policy measures and actions:

(a) Develop and increase investment in gender-responsive legislation, policies, budgets and programmes in these important areas;

(b) Promote decent work for all segments of society and strengthen labour market regulations and social provisions in order to create a more level playing field for women, including by enacting and enforcing minimum wage legislation, eliminating discriminatory wage practices, and promoting measures such as public work programmes to enable women to cope with recurrent crises and long-term unemployment;

(c) Promote women's rights at work by developing and implementing legislative measures and policies guaranteeing women's labour and human rights in the workplace, including minimum wages, social protection, reducing the gender wage gap, promoting collective bargaining and organizing recruitment, and retention and promotion policies targeting women;

(d) Recognize and support unpaid care work through the development of infrastructure and time-saving technologies and the provision of public services, including accessible and quality child care, incentives such as parental leave, flexible working arrangements and allowances;

(e) Design, develop and implement a universal, comprehensive and gender-responsive social protection system complemented by accessible, quality social services using maximum available resources towards progressive realization of these commitments and with a specific focus on ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups of women;

(f) Regularly collect, analyse and disseminate sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on women's access to decent work, unpaid care and social protection and monitor the impact of associated policy measures;

(g) Conduct time-use surveys and support the use of satellite accounts to determine the value of women's unpaid care to the economy, as well as regular time-use studies to determine the extent of women's and girls' unpaid care burden and the impact of associated policy measures.

76. **The United Nations system and other international organizations are encouraged to:**

(a) Support Member States to conduct gender analysis of decent work, unpaid care and social protection policies and support the design of gender responsive legislation and policies in these areas;

(b) Support and advocate with Member States to increase and monitor their investment in gender-sensitive policies and programmes to promote women's access to decent work; recognize, reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid care work on women and girls; and deliver gender-responsive social protection and social services;

(c) Support and promote innovative programme responses to ensure women's access to decent work, to recognize, measure, reduce and redistribute the unequal burden of care work, and promote gender-sensitive social protection initiatives and measures for women and girls, and support and encourage the scale-up of existing good practice programmes and initiatives.

(d) Support and facilitate Member State efforts to collect, analyse and disseminate sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on women's access to decent work, unpaid care and social protection.